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# COVID effects on the youths in Bangladesh

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# Presentation Structure

- How were the youths in Bangladesh faring before COVID?
- Survey and respondent's profile
- Impact of COVID-19
  - Youth employment and NEET
  - Are young women bearing a greater brunt of the pandemic?
  - Youth learning

# State of Youths in Bangladesh: Demographic Transition

- More than a third of the population are youth (aged 15–35)
- Great prospects for economic growth—**demographic dividend**—if the youth are productive
  - The **window of opportunity is limited**—declining birthrate and improving longevity to reverse trend by 2100

# State of Youths of Bangladesh: Largely Unrealized potentials

- Unemployment is **10.6%** among youth (15-29 years), **more than twice as high as general population** (LFS, 2016-2017)
- **95%** of all employed youths in informal sector, **85%** in general population (LFS 2016)
- **38%** of Bangladeshi youth are not in education, earning, or training (NEET)—**16% higher than the global average**, **9%** higher than the South Asia average (ILO, 2017).

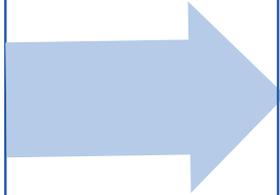
# State of Youths of Bangladesh: Largely Unrealized potentials

- About 5% have tertiary education, 14% have any kind of vocational training (BIGD, 2018).
- Yet, unemployment rate for youth with tertiary education very high: 34%
- Bangladesh ranked 177 of 183 countries in employment and opportunities domain in the Global Youth Development Index 2016

# The Survey: Sample extracted from BIGD-BRAC Youth Survey 2018

## Youth Survey 2018

- Nationally representative survey covering 5 divisions in Bangladesh
- Sample size: 4200 youths
- Age group: 15-35 years
- Face-to-face survey

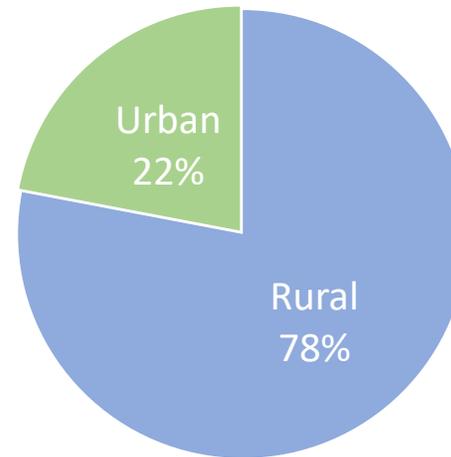
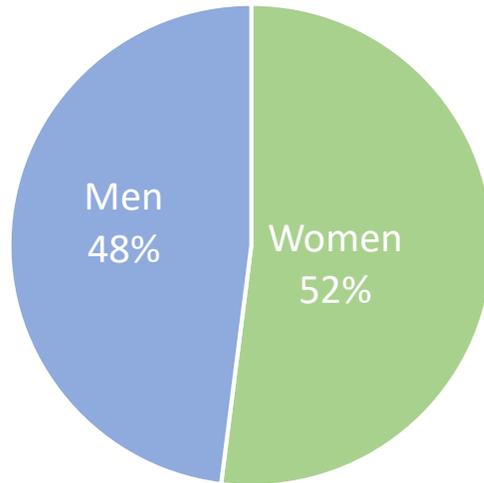
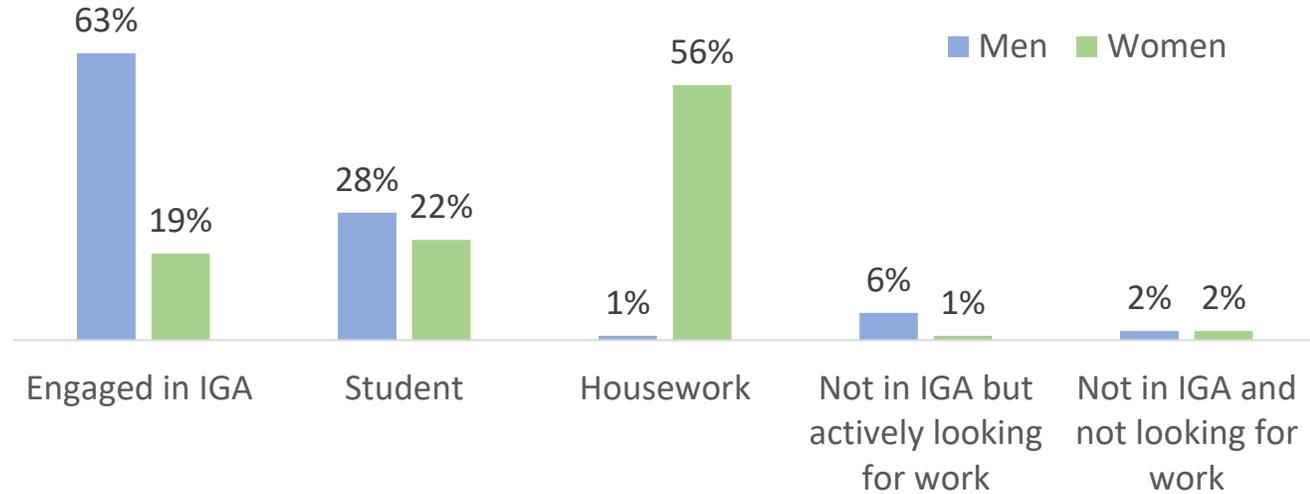


## Youth Survey 2021

- Follow-up survey on youths within the cut-off range
- 3795 youths within cutoff range
- Success rate: **51%**
- Final sample size : **1929 youths**
- Phone survey

# Sample descriptive

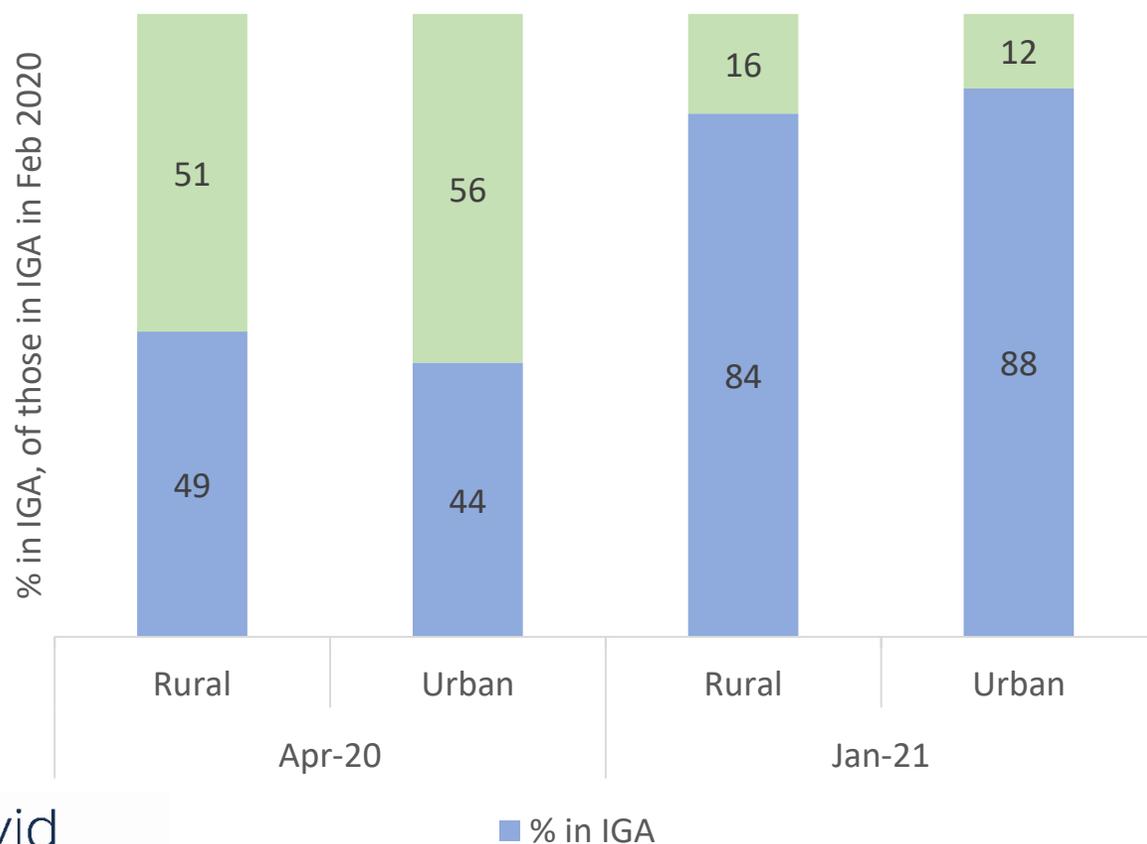
- Average age: 25 years
- Pre-COVID
  - IGA: 41%
  - Students : 25%
  - Housework: 28%



# How has COVID-19 affected youth jobs and incomes?

# Youth Engagement in IGA

Among the youths working before pandemic, 15% were out of labour market as of January 2021



**Among all working population:**

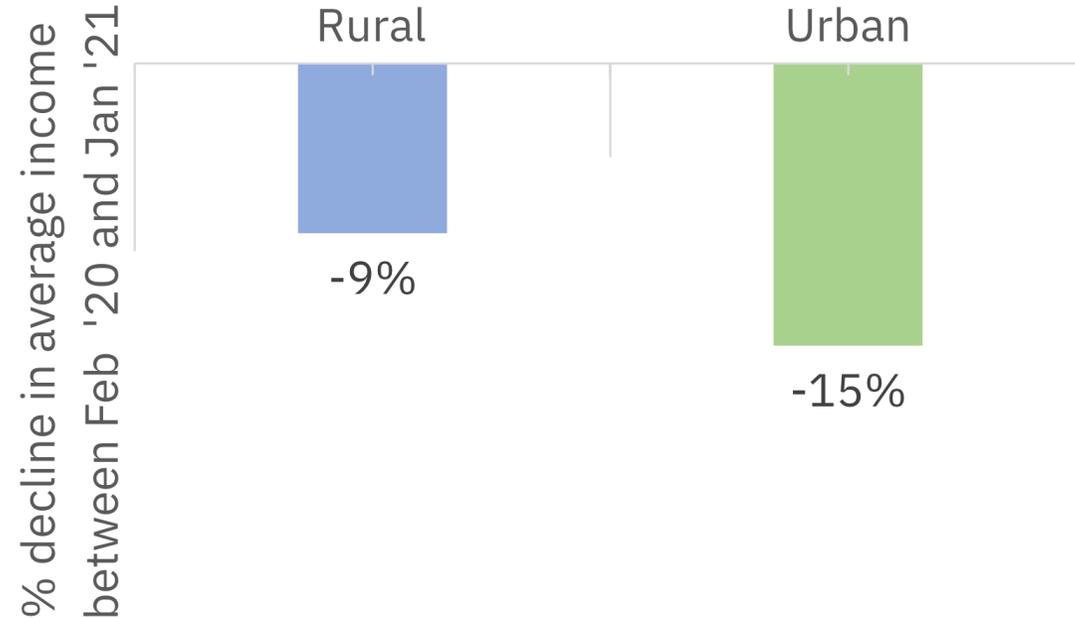
(PPRC-BIGD Survey, 2021)

8% pre-COVID employed were out of labour market. The rate was:

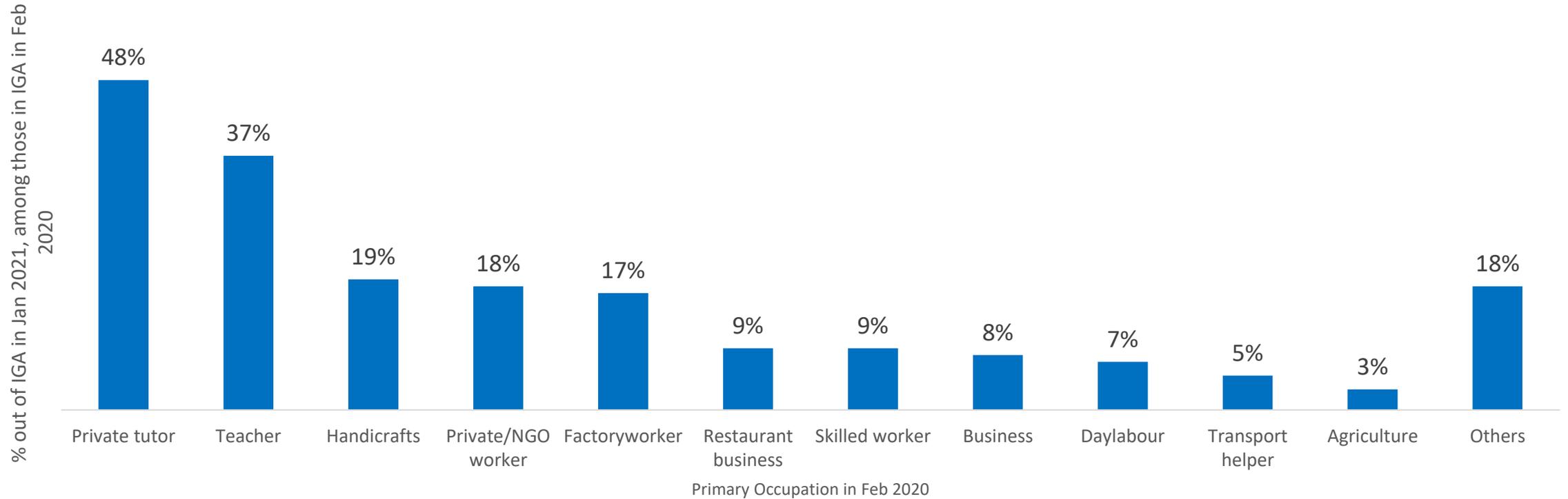
- 6% in rural areas
- 10% in urban areas

# Change in income & working hours- recovery much worse in urban areas

- Average income 11% below pre-COVID in January '21 for youth who were working before COVID and in Jan '21
- Average weekly working hours fell by 3%



# Youths out of IGA in each occupation



# Are youths bearing the greater brunt of the pandemic?

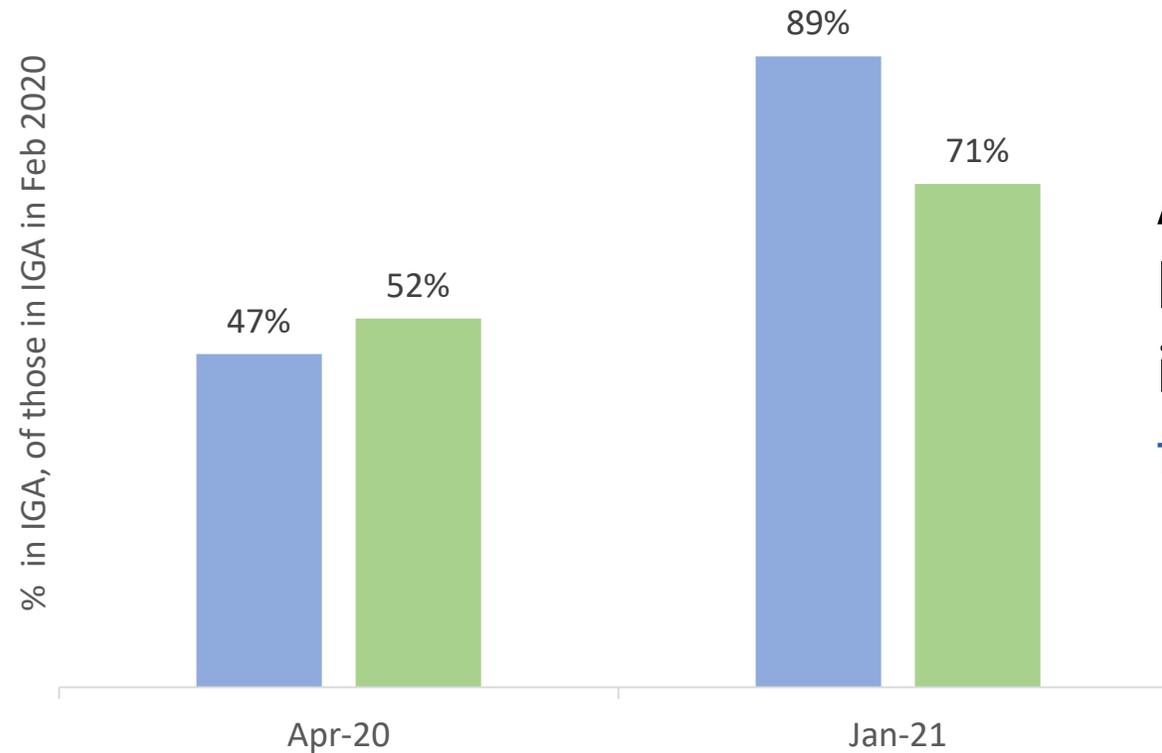
All working population (PPRC-BIGD Livelihood Survey 2021)	Youth working population (Youth Survey 2021)
Per capita household income <b>7%</b> below COVID levels	Average income <b>11%</b> below pre-COVID levels
<b>8%</b> of pre-COVID employed people were still out of jobs in March 2021	<b>15%</b> of employed youths were still out of jobs in January 2021

# Are young women bearing the greater brunt of the pandemic?

# State of Young women in Bangladesh: Generally Much Worse Than Young Men

- Unemployment : young women - 15%, young men -8.2% (15-29 years) (LFS, 2016-2017)
- Unemployment rate for youth with tertiary education: 43% vs 30% (CPD, 2018)
- 90% of NEET are women

# COVID has a much greater impact on young women's employment



A third of young women working before the pandemic are no longer in IGA in January 2021—**three times higher than men**

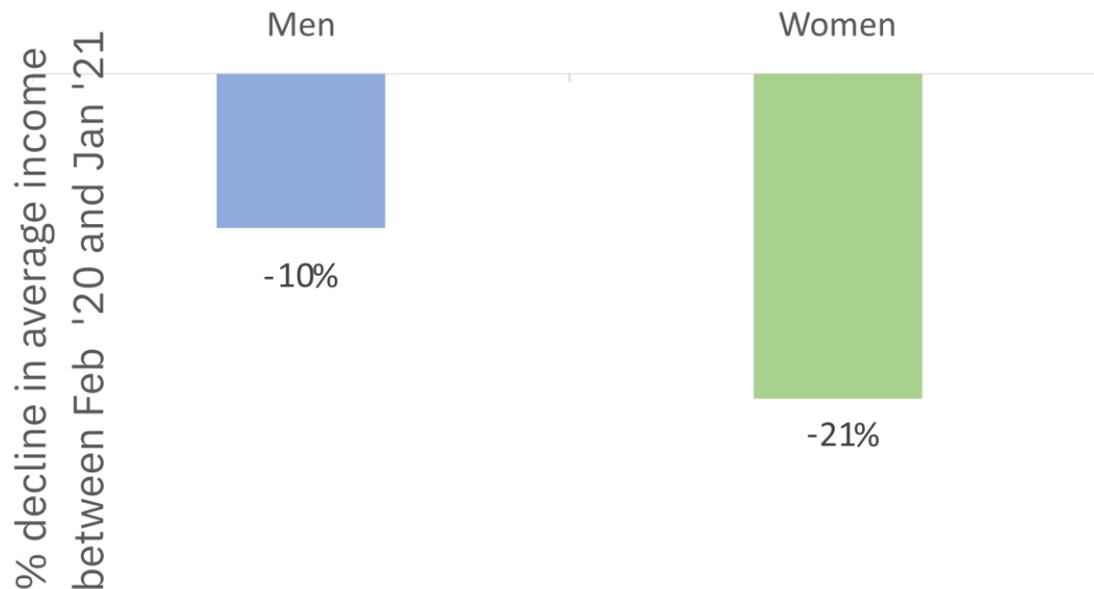
# Main occupations of women most affected

Percentage of young women was high in almost all the most affected occupations

Occupation in February 2020	Men (%)	Women (%)
Handicrafts	1	21
Agriculture	12	17
Private tutor	9	16
Teacher	2	14
Private/NGO worker	12	11
Factory worker	5	7
Day labour	12	6
Business	12	3
Others	7	3
Restaurant business	10	1
Transport helper	9	0
Skilled worker	9	0

# Disproportionate impact on income & working hours

- Incomes for young women decreased by twice as much than their men counterparts
- Average weekly working hours for young women who are still working fell by 15%, compared to only 1.5% for men.



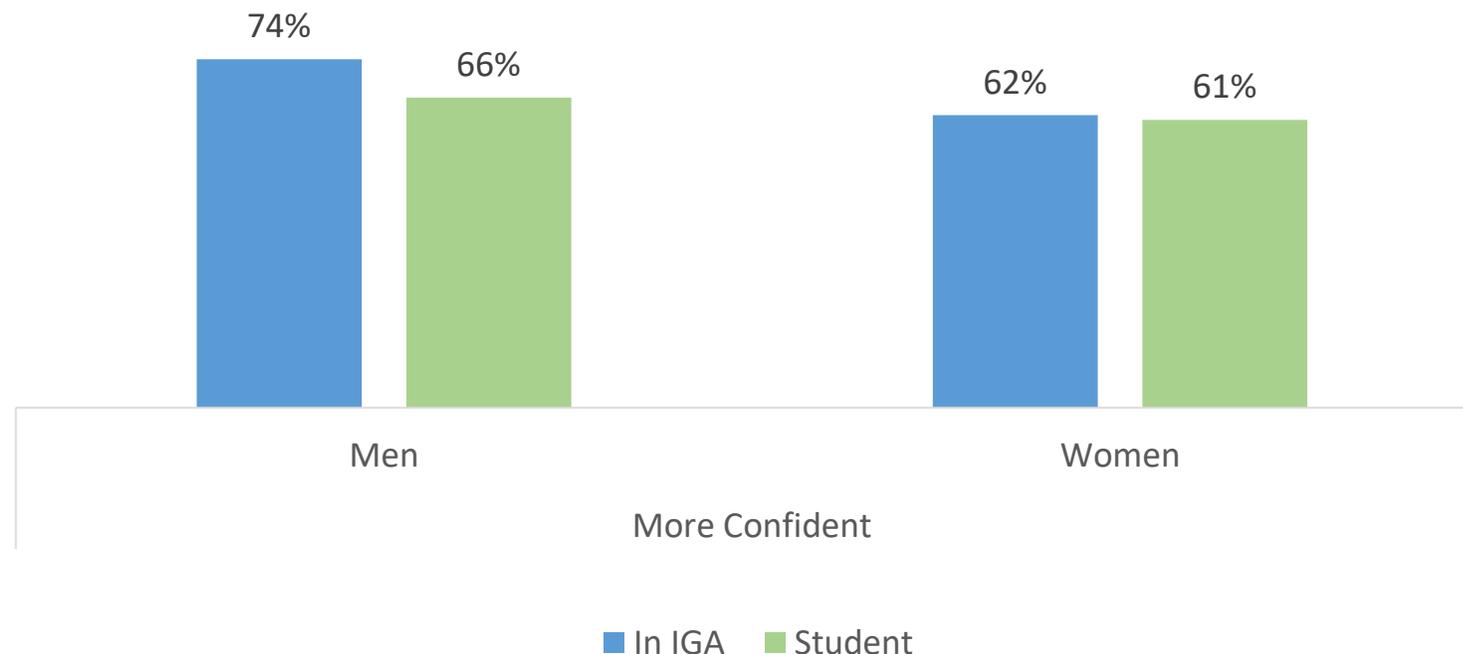
	Change in average weekly working hours
Total	-3%
Men	-1.5%
Women	<b>-15%</b>

# Implications for young women

- So many working women out work for a prolonged period take many to permanently stop working, further reducing already low rate of women's labour market participation.
- Proportion of females in NEET could increase further
- Negative impact on economy and women's empowerment in Bangladesh

# Confidence about future jobs

- 62% of respondents expressed confidence about getting into IGA post-COVID
- Young women, students or in IGA, reported lower confidence level



# Youth's Mental Wellbeing During the Pandemic

# Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)

- Framed by seven positively worded statements with five possible responses, ranging from “none of the time” to “all the time”.
- Respondents’ final answers were aggregated on a scale of 7-35.
- Higher scores representing better mental well-being.

**Probable depression  
or anxiety**

Scores between  
7 and 17

**Possible depression  
or anxiety**

- Scores between 18  
and 20

**No anxiety or  
depression**

- Scores above 20

# Mental well-being

- Average mental health score of youths during lockdown in April 2020 was 21.38, which increased to a score of 25.1 in February 2021.
- Young women consistently reported lower mental well-being than young men

		Probable Anxiety / Depression (%)		Possible Anxiety / Depression (%)		No sign of anxiety / Depression (%)	
		Apr-20	Feb-21	Apr-20	Feb-21	Apr-20	Feb-21
N		326	25	536	163	1026	1700
Total		17%	1%	27%	9%	54%	90%
Gender	Male	16%	1%	25%	6%	59%	93%
	Female	19%	2%	31%	11%	50%	87%

# Improvement in mental wellbeing: young men are coping better

20% of young women vs 12% of young men who were in probable or possible depression/anxiety both during lockdown and in Jan '21

# How has COVID-19 affected youth learning?

# Youth learning during COVID

- 25% of youths in our sample were students
- Educational institutes have been closed from 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Less than 5% of the youths in the phone survey took any new trainings in the past year

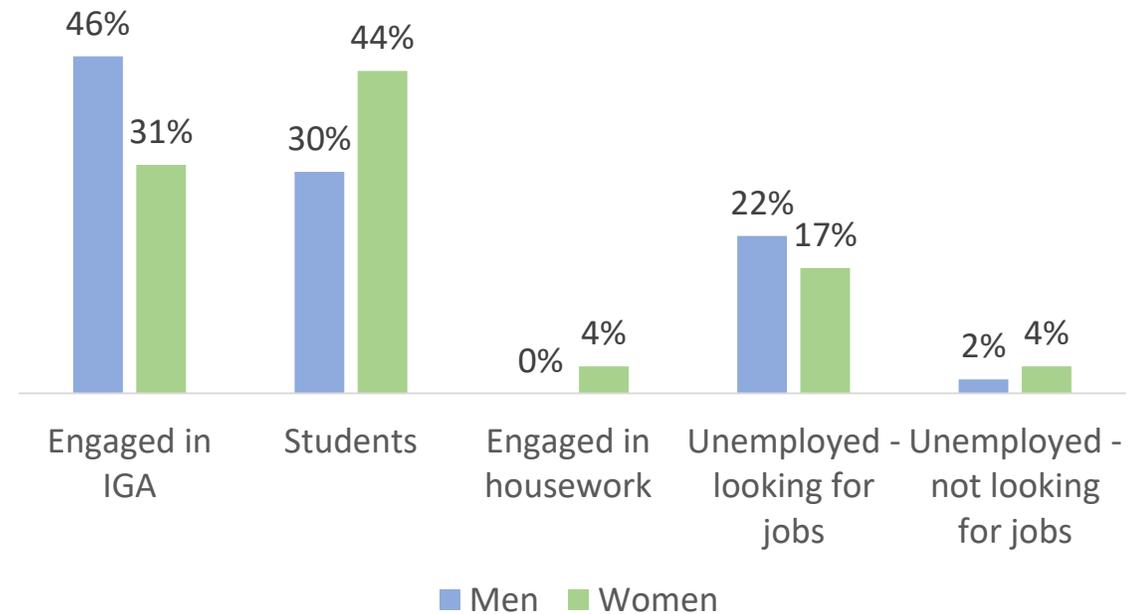
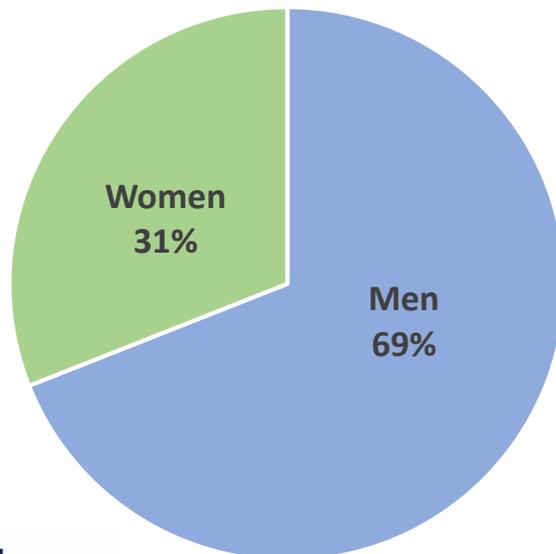
Less than 50% of the youths in the phone survey thought that they need new training in the post-COVID job market.

# Social Media Survey

- Online self-administered survey through Facebook
- Conducted from 12<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
- Sample size – 538
- Non-representative sample:
  - More educated
  - Higher socioeconomic background
  - More digitally literate

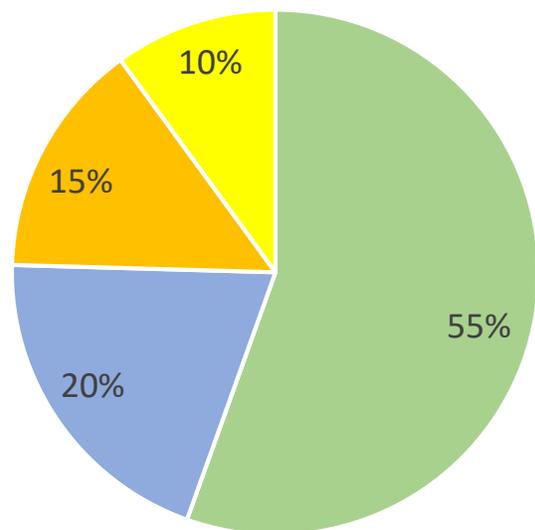
# Social Media Survey: Sample profile

- Average age – 24.8 years
- Pre-COVID :
  - IGA: 42% of total sample
  - Students : 34%
  - Youths in housework: 1%



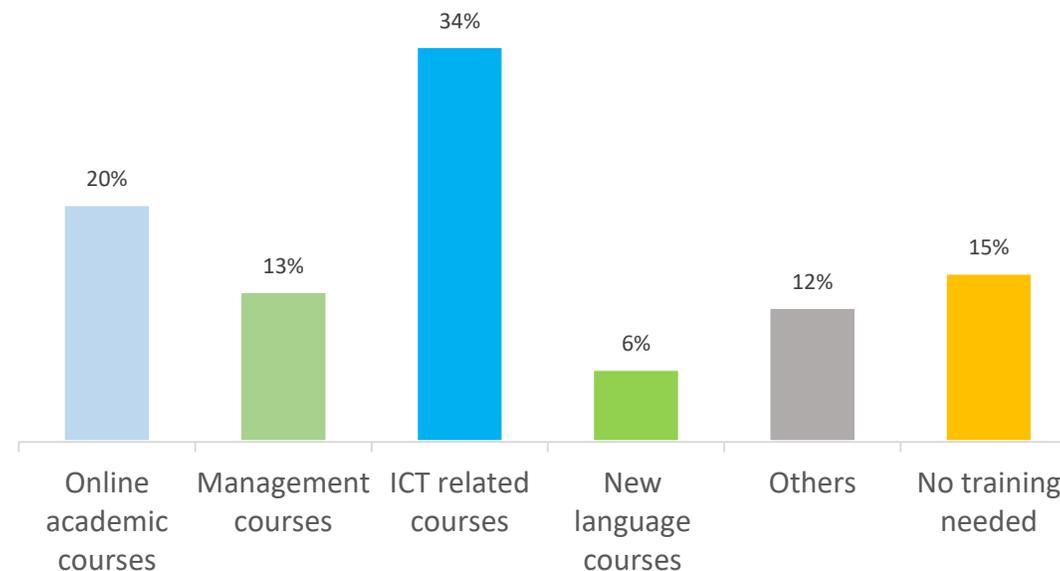
# Training: phone survey vs. social media survey

27% said that they took some form of training/online courses



■ Online academic courses ■ Management courses ■ ICT related courses ■ Others

85% believe they require some new form of training to help get jobs in the post-COVID job market



# Implications for Human Capital Building

- Majority of youth did not take part in any new trainings, though educational institutes closed for over a year
- No development in human capital during this period of school closures
- Widening the existing gap in skills among the Bangladeshi youth, e.g., richer vs poorer youth
- Not developing skills they might require for post-COVID job market

# Key takeaway

- COVID-19 has worsened youth's state in labour market:
  - Greater job and income loss
  - Urban income generation recovery is much less than rural.
- Mid-term effect on young women is much larger, both in terms of job loss and income.
- Inequality in skills acquisition is likely to be worsened – more educated and digitally active youth are acquiring more digital skills compared to general population.